

Children's Religious Education 2015 - 2016 Annual Report

Newtown Monthly Meeting's Children's Religious Education committee had another robust and busy year. This year we ran 23 weeks of First Day School classes, with three classes plus nursery care scheduled each week.

Barbara Kibler continued to serve as the nursery teacher, assisted by Eileen Grant. Nikki Loscalzo and Melanie Stebbins taught the K - 3rd grade class, Sarah Buxton, assisted by Kim Mancuso, taught the 4th - 6th grade class, and Angie Ratliff, Cynthia Paces and Tim Mammel taught the 7th - 10th grade class.

In 2015-2016 the First Day School program had 71 children (nursery through high school) under its care with approximately 55 children (infant through high school) periodically or regularly attending classes and other events. We had 14 high school students who served as babysitters. The class distribution for all active children and teens was:

Nursery - 2 children
K - 3rd - 9 children
4th - 6th - 13 children
7th - 8th - 15 teens
9th - 12th - 17 teens

We had no new families join us this year, we had one new baby born to a member family. As has been the case for several years, our population is continuing a demographic shift of the children getting older with fewer younger children being part of the meeting. This year we had a robust group of 11 eighth graders under our care, however, next year we will only have 32 children under our care who are in the eighth grade or below, only 29 of whom actively, or periodically, attend.

It is with this demographic shift in mind that we are looking to significantly restructure our Children's First Day School classes for next year.

The Children's Religious Education committee continued its tradition of organizing fall and spring fundraisers to benefit charitable organizations. In the fall, for the 12th Annual Simple Supper the children participated in the process of discernment and decided to raise money for the Valley Youth House Synergy Project, to help homeless teens, and raised \$1,623.85. In the spring, the 11th Annual Lasagna Dinner raised \$2,285 in support of the Mercer Street Friends Pre-K Summer Program.

In December, the Children's Religious Education committee organized the Christmas Program based on the Dr. Seuss classic story "How the Grinch Stole Christmas." The children played music, sang, and read excerpts from the story. This year 29 children from kindergarten to 8th grade participated in the pageant.

At Easter, we distributed bibles to six fourth graders. CRE also oversaw a well attended annual egg hunt.

In June, we handed out *Faith and Practice* to ten 8th graders and we had six seniors graduate high school.

Throughout the year CRE continued to provide service opportunities and social awareness for kids and families. We conducted our second annual school supply drive in September for Mercer Street Friends. In December we had the kids wrap plasticware for TASK, we continued the newly re-established the tradition of collecting hats and gloves for MSF at Christmas time, and we integrated service events into our FDS classes, including our children planting in the Peace Garden and collecting items for the MSF food bank.

Finally, CRE continued its focus on communication with families. We maintained a Facebook group to share information about events both in our meeting and in the larger Quaker community and had nearly 100% participation in the group among families who are on Facebook and whose children attend First Day School. Also, we sent a monthly email newsletter to Newtown Monthly Meeting families to let them know about events happening at Newtown Meeting for the upcoming month.

The CRE committee hopes to continue its highly committed level of care and teaching in the new fiscal year while facing the reality of our shifting demographics.